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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/729,668	12/05/2003	Peter M. Bonutti	2500DV2CN2DV3CN2	3159
7590	05/02/2005			EXAMINER THALER, MICHAEL H
Kimberly V. Perry, Esq. U.S. Surgical A Divisional of Tyco Healthcare Group, LP 150 Glover Avenue Norwalk, CT 06856			ART UNIT 3731	PAPER NUMBER
DATE MAILED: 05/02/2005				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/729,668	BONUTTI, PETER M.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Michael Thaler	3731

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 March 2005.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-5,7-23,25-46,48-79 and 81-101 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 7,9,12,14,43-46 and 85-88 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-5,8,10,11,13,15-23,25-42,48-79,81-84 and 89-101 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 3/21/05
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: _____

Art Unit: 3731

Claims 7, 9, 12, 14, 43-46 and 85-88 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b) as being drawn to a nonelected species, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Election was made without traverse in the reply filed on August 18, 2004.

Claims 1, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15-19, 27-30, 38-42, 48-51, 53-55, 59-62, 64-70, 72 and 73 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Sheldon (3,417,745). Sheldon discloses the steps of providing a retractor (e.g. 10, 57, 57a in figure 4) having a distal portion and an expandable bladder 57 coupled to the distal portion, positioning the expandable body between adjacent vertebrae (noting the term "inter-vertebral space" in col. 9, lines 62-66) and expanding the expandable bladder to spread the adjacent vertebrae apart (The expansion of the expandable body 57 within the inter-vertebral space creates space for viewing as described in col. 9, lines 66-70. The creation of this space between the vertebrae inherently spreads the adjacent vertebrae apart.) Alternatively, it would have been obvious that the creation of this space between the vertebrae spreads the adjacent vertebrae apart since the space that is created is located between the vertebrae. As to claim 8, bladder 57 is wedge-shaped as seen in figure 4. As to claim 49, Sheldon

Art Unit: 3731

discloses the step of introducing the retractor through a passage of a cannula 5 (col. 3, lines 9-13).

Claims 2-5, 20-23, 25, 26, 31-37, 52, 63, 71, 74, 78, 79, 82-84 and 89-101 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheldon (3,417,745). Sheldon fails to specifically indicate that the herniated disc described from col. 1, line 51 to col. 2, line 7 is operated on. However, it is old and well known in this art to remove an intervertebral disc when it is diagnosed as being herniated in order to obtain the advantage of relieving pain. It would have been obvious to remove the herniated disc during the Sheldon procedure so that this procedure too would have this advantage. As to claim 71, Sheldon fails to disclose applying a vacuum to deflate the bladder 57. However, it is old and well known in this art to deflate a balloon by applying a vacuum to the balloon in order to obtain the advantage of quickly deflating it. It would have been obvious to use a vacuum to deflate the Sheldon bladder 57 so that it too would have this advantage. The above well known in the art statements are taken to be admitted prior art because applicant failed to traverse the examiner's assertions (M.P.E.P. 2144.03).

Claims 56-58, 75-77 and 81 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheldon (3,417,745) in view of

Art Unit: 3731

McDaniel (4,501,266). Sheldon fails to disclose using the device in a knee. However, Sheldon does teach that the device may be used in areas of the body other than the spine (col. 2, lines 8-9). Further, McDaniel teaches that the knee is an area of the body that requires surgical intervention and distraction. It would have been obvious to use the Sheldon device in the knee for this reason.

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 1-5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15-23, 25-42, 48-79, 81-84 and 89-101 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-22 of U.S. Patent No. 6,017,305. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably

Art Unit: 3731

distinct from each other because the minor differences between the claims involve merely obvious differences.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Note col. 8, lines 47-51 of Tanaka et al. (6,860,892).

Applicant's arguments filed March 21, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The Sheldon balloons are made of Mylar (col. 8, lines 55-62) which is an inelastic material as admitted by Applicant in claim 21 of Bonutti (6,017,305). An balloon made of an inelastic material inherently expands to a predetermined shape, as opposed to an balloon made of an elastic material which expands to a shape based upon least resistance presented by the surrounding material. The combination of balloons 57, 57a of Sheldon will therefore expand both laterally as well as longitudinally to apply significant force in the lateral direction as well as the longitudinal direction and will therefore expand the vertebrae apart in the lateral direction, at least a slight amount. The amount of expansion has not been claimed.

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this

Art Unit: 3731

action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Thaler whose telephone number is (571)272-4704. The examiner can normally be reached Monday to Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Anhtuan T. Nguyen can be reached on (571)272-4963. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703)872-9306.

mht
4/25/05



MICHAEL THALER
PRIMARY EXAMINER
ART UNIT 3731